

Student Engagement Co-Curricular Best Practices: Case Studies and Shared Programs

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Introduction and Goals

Students, staff and faculty have been developing noteworthy and successful sustainability projects and programs for student engagement at every UC campus for years, but there had never been a system-wide inventory on programs in common or to document details of novel programs. Having a fellow at the UC Office of the President provided an opportunity to document and spread these innovative ideas. This project collected two types of information: 1) programs that are likely to be common across all campuses (Best Practices Inventory); and 2) novel and replicable best practices that could make large impacts if adopted by more campuses (Best Practice Case Studies). The overall goal of this project was to inventory the programs campuses have in common and document novel best practices to encourage co-curricular programming that incorporates sustainability education into the experience of all UC students.

Methods

Inventory and best practices questions were developed and formatted with feedback from the UC Global Climate Leadership Council's Student Engagement Working Group using Google Forms. Both questionnaires were sent to campus sustainability professionals with recommendations to work with Student Affairs, student leaders, and CNI/GFI fellows. Case studies were capped at three per campus. Data analysis was completed in Google Sheets and Excel. The Student Engagement Working Group provided feedback on data presentation and selection of best practices for distribution. Resulting information has been distributed to Student Affairs Vice Chancellors, campus sustainability professionals, and Presidential Initiative fellows.

Results: Best Practices Inventory

Inventory Summary

All ten UC campuses completed the inventory. The average number of student engagement projects and programs was 18. The campus with the lowest number of programs was UCSF with 2, but fewer programs were expected because UCSF does not have undergraduate students. The campus with the highest number of programs was UCSB with 30.

Student Government

Student Government is often central to sustainability efforts on UC campuses. Students are active and engaged through elected or appointed office and employment through centers, units, and operational functions. Additional programs that are active but not covered in the list below include an Associated Student Green Bill at UCSB.

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| Sustainability Coordinator, Team, or Board in Associated Students (AS) | Cal, UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF, UCR |
| Sustainability Office or Campus Center in AS | Cal, UC Davis, UCSB |
| Review Group for AS Legislation | UC Davis, UCR |
| Sustainability, Recycling, and/or Compost Units | UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCSB |
| Sustainability Coordinator or Team within Grad Assembly | Cal, UCLA, UCR |
| Student-Led Sustainability Operational Functions | UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF, UCR |

Athletics and Recreation

Athletics and recreation sports provide venues for sustainability education to reach a broader audience. Campuses have used opportunities like sports events to encourage waste reduction, composting, and lower water use. Recreation activities' environmental impact can be curbed through sustainability plans and enacted through coordinator positions. Additionally, UCSB has a Sports Facilities Sustainability Committee but this best practice was not surveyed for all campuses.

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| Game Day Challenge: Football | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA |
| Game Day Challenge: Basketball | Cal, UCLA, UCSB |
| Game Day Challenge: Soccer | UCSB |
| Water pledges during sports events | UCLA |
| Rec Sports Sustainability Coordinator | UCLA, UCSB, UCR |
| Sustainability Plan for Athletics and Rec sports | UCSB |

Residence Halls

Residence hall life shapes students' day-to-day lives in ways that can impact their habits for the rest of their lives. Residence halls also serve as some of the universities' most important living laboratories, giving a glimpse of what conservation efforts can be accomplished comfortably. Additional programs that campuses listed on their survey response include: Dining Hall Waste Audits at UC Davis and UCSB; Housing Green Guide at UCSB; and Apartment Swap Shop at UCSB.

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| Environmental or Sustainability Theme Halls | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Resident Advisor (RA) Training on Sustainability | UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| Eco-representatives | Cal, UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCR, UCSB |
| Farm to Fork Themed Dining | Cal, UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Low-Energy Use Competitions | Cal, UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| Low-Water Use Competitions | UC Davis, UCSD, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| Zero Waste Program | Cal, UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Recyclemania | Cal, UC Davis, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| Waste Reduction during Residence Hall Move-out | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF, UCR |

New Student Orientation and First Year Experience

New student orientation and first-year-experience programs and projects give campuses a chance to set expectations for students to engage with sustainability topics and themes throughout their higher education experience. All campuses had at least one sustainability-related orientation activity or first-year program.

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| Orientation: Zero Waste and Sustainable Food Events | Cal, UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Orientation: Bike Safety and Public Transportation Workshops | UC Davis, UCSD, UCLA, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| First Year Experience: Campus Book Projects | UC Davis, UCSD, UCR, UCSB |
| First Year Experience: Seminars | UC Davis, UCR, UCSF, UCSB |
| First Year Experience: Spring Insight Tours/Open Houses | Cal, UC Davis, UCSB, UCSF |

Peer-to-Peer, Internship, & Ambassadors

All UC campuses can increase the sustainability of their campus and improve their students' leadership and professional development through peer-to-peer, internship, and ambassador programs. This on-the-ground training creates the environment for students to grow in and out of the classroom and shows dedication to the spectrum of learning styles. Other programs that were not surveyed but are operational include UC Berkeley's alternative break trips for environmental and social justice.

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| Student Leadership Training | Cal, UC Davis, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| Student Leadership Hub | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Internships | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF, UCR |
| Student-led education | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCR, UCSB, UCSF |
| Student run food co-ops | Cal, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Green funds and referendums | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Gardens and farms | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF, UCR |
| Conservation and restoration projects | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF |
| Student food bank or food resources | Cal, UC Davis, UCLA, UCSB, UCSF, UCR |

Results: Best Practices Case Studies

Based on campus survey responses, 9 case studies have the potential to significantly impact the educational experience of UC students. Below is a complete list of the case study topics and an example summary from one case study: Natural Reserves as Living Labs (UCSC), People of Color Sustainability Collective (UCSC), Sustainability Theme Living Community (UCLA), Student Environmental Resource Center (UCB), Dining Halls Waste Reduction (UCD), Education for Sustainable Living Program (UCSC), Residence Hall Gardens (UCD), Sustainability Internship Program (UCSB), and Student Institute for Sustainability Leadership (UCI).



People of Color Sustainability Collective

Primary Leader: Adriana Renteria, Coordinator, arenter1@ucsc.edu
Lead Group: The People of Color Sustainability Collective (PoCSC) is an initiative of the Ethnic Resource Centers (American Indian Resource Center), Internship, & Ambassadors Programs, Resource Centers, Diversity and Inclusivity
Category: Student Leadership, Government, and Resource Centers, Peer-to-Peer, Internship, & Ambassadors Programs, Resource Centers, Diversity and Inclusivity
Description: The mission of the PoCSC is to highlight the work that communities of color have done to advance sustainability and to redefine sustainability to include diverse cultural interpretations. PoCSC works towards creating opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to engage in critical dialogues about the intersections between race, class, gender, culture, justice, and the environment.
Inspiration: The Ethnic Resource Centers Directors had a student panel for seniors to share feedback on their experience at UCSC. One student shared a story about throwing trash away at the McHenry library and a white male student harshly chastised them for not throwing their waste in the correct receptacle. The student was upset by their experience and considered transferring. The Resource Center Directors recognized the connection to student retention and created #POCSustainability for students to share and connect with others. Student's enthusiastic response led to the creation of the PoCSC.
Needs: PoCSC supports a staff person, four paid student interns, and programming.
Replicability: We ultimately see our efforts as replicable throughout the UC system, so the UCs can lead in inclusive sustainability by encouraging diverse perspectives and solutions in addressing environmental challenges. UC Berkeley and UC Santa Barbara have shown interest in establishing collectives.
Learning outcomes: PoCSC is currently undertaking campus-wide research on inclusivity in sustainability for feedback on: participation in environmental sustainability-related programs and resources; perceptions of campus priorities; in-class learning experiences; and personal experiences and suggestions.
Holistic Engagement: PoCSC has cultivated community all over campus where students feel comfortable exploring the multiple aspects of their identities and how these identities intersect with their passion for the environment.
Potential for Improvements: In the future, PoCSC will reexamine the structure of the Collective to expand its capacity to serve and connect many students while maintaining the integrity of the project, keeping rooted in the communities of color it is meant to serve. Securing and maintaining funding for the PoCSC coordinator and student interns is essential to our ongoing success.



Conclusions and Future Goals

The project was an important data collection effort for documenting student engagement activities on a system-wide basis. The inventory helps campus administrators, sustainability professionals, and students understand their strengths and areas for improvement compared to their sister campuses. The case studies of novel best practices will provide this group of people with an overview, organizational steps and resources needed, campus impact, and access to well-informed colleagues. Both the inventory and the case studies aim to help sustainability professionals and future Carbon Neutrality Initiative Fellows enact impactful, broad reaching, and innovative approaches to student engagement in sustainability activities.

Future goals for the Best Practices Inventory:

- Document number and demographics of students involved
- Document the reach of programs individually and collectively at the level: (1) the entire student body; (2) a large subset of students; (3) students with a strong interest in sustainability

Future goals for Best Practice Case Studies:

- Include greenhouse gas, water use, waste reduction and other sustainability metrics
- Collect data during winter or early spring for improved participation

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